

CHAPTER – I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE BODO

The Bodos are a race of the Mongolian people who are described as the inhabitants of a country lying to the north of the Himalayas and in the western belt of China. This land is known as 'Bod'. The word Bod means a homeland. It is also said that there were many parts of the country known as Hor Bod, Kur Bod.¹

The inhabitants of Bod country are known as the Bodo Ficha or Bodocha or Bodosa (Bodo means land and Ficha or cha means children, hence children of the Bod country). In course of time they come to be known as simply Boddo-Boro.

According to R. M. Nath, when Buddhism spread in to Bodo countries, especially the southern part, inhabited by the Buddhist Lama, was known as Bsti-Bod-Tibod-Tibbot-Tibet².

Linguistically the Bodos include a large group of people who are the speakers of the North and East Bengal Boros of the Brahmaputra valley, Meches of lower Assam and west Bengal, Rabhas, Garos, Dimasas and Kacharis of Cachar district, Tipras, Lalungs, Sonowals, Hajongs, Mishings, Deuris, Chutias, etc.

Hence, by the term Bodo in general which the generic name of the people. It means all the Tibeto-Burman (Bodo) speaking group of Sino-Tibeto origin.

The Kacharis: The Eastern Bodos of Cachar (or Kachar) district, (specially North Cachar) call themselves Kachari's. According to S.K. Chatarjee this group of bodos assumed their name from the district of Kachar. The meaning of is low lands or border lands, and is originated from Sanskrit Kaksa-Vata-Kachada-Kachar.

They are simply known as Dimasa Dima= big water i.e. Brahmaputra sa or cha = son or children, hence, Dimasa = son or children of the big water Brahmaputra). The Kacharies are divided in to several groups. They are the Sonowal Kochari's (also known as Thengal Kocharis), Dimasa Kocharis, Lalung Kocharies and even the Rabhas.

On the other hand the Bodos or Boros of the Brahmaputra valley, particularly of some districts like Kamrup, Sanitpur, Mongoldoi, Barpeta and Jolpaiguri of west Bengal are known as Bodo-Kacharis or Boro Kocharis, although all of now are popularly known as Bodos.

1.2 CONCENTRATION OF THE BODO KACHARI PEOPLE IN GOALPARA DISTRICT

Goalpara district is situated in the western most part of the State of Assam. Goalpara district was re-organised in to many small districts at present, these are (i) Goalpara, (ii) Kokrajhar, (iii) Dhubri, (iv) Bongaigaon and (v) Chirang (part). As the topic of the study is “*Bodo Folk Songs with Special Reference to Goalpara District in Assam, India.*” All the data collected are concerned with the Bodo people concentrated in Goalpara district area only. As Bodos are the aboriginal people of Assam, they are inhabited throughout the state of Assam. Bodo people are not less in number in Goalpara district. In Goalpara district the Bodo people has inhabited in 22 gaon panchayat areas out of 82 in the district. Maximum number of Bodo people inhabited in 20 gaon panchayats area under 36 no. scheduled tribes (ST) legislative assembly constituency. The total number of Bodo population in the district is 82,232 as per the voluntary population census done by United Bodo Peoples Organisation (UBPO) on the basis of Govt. population census 2011. The Bodo people of the district have got their own dialect. As per the history of Bodo literature, it is evidence that the first printed book of Bodo language was published in 1915 (*Boroni Fisa O Ayen*, edited by Ganggacharan Kachari) by Habraghat Boro Sonmiloni (1911-12), the oldest Bodo Organisation of the Habraghat Porgana under Goalpara district as well.¹ There is 192 nos. of revenue and non revenue villages within the district having 36,905 household. The total geographical area of the district is 1,824 sq. kms. and the total population is 10.1 lakhs (2011). The major communities inhabiting in the district are Bodo, Rabha, Garo, Muslim, Rajbongshi, Nath, Kalita, Koch, Banay, Hajong, Bengali, Nepali, Adibasi, Marowari, Sutradhar, Brahmin etc.

1.3 AREA OF THE STUDY

The area of the study is the Bodo people dominated villages under the present Goalpara civil district. It is mainly the Bodo dominated areas within the 20 gaon panchayat areas under 36 No. Dudhnoi Scheduled Tribes (ST) Legislative Assembly Constituency (LAC). The Bodo people inhabited in those areas with their own Language, Literature and Culture with the distinct identification. These areas are selected for this study for the interest of preservation of the traditional folk culture found in form of folk songs of the Bodo people.

1.4 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

For the study of a community the scholar should go through their social custom and traditions, there should understand and found the social status and civilization of that particular community. So, in reference to the first Bodo book "*Boroni Fisa O Ayen*" (1915), the dialect used by the Bodo people of this region is not below the standard level. So, there are various valuable folk songs which reflect their tradition. So, to collect these very folk songs for preservation, the analytical study is important.

Therefore, the main aims and objectives of this study is outlined as follows –

- (i) To collect the Bodo folk songs which are prevailing among the People of Goalpara district area.
- (ii) To distinguish the themes and subject matter of Bodo folk songs in Goalpara district area
- (iii) To distinguish the dialect used in folk songs of the study area.
- (iv) To categorize the folk songs prevail in the study area to make comparative assessment with folk songs of other area.
- (v) To highlight the Bodo folk songs of Habraghat area in Goalpara district.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The Bodo Kachari people of Goalpara district area have their own local dialect and distinct culture of their own for which they have lots of popular folk songs. Some of which are as popular as in present days too. So, in this research work such very folk songs which have no author and specific time period of its composition, but only transmitted from one generation to the next. During the field works of this research work it is learnt that the popular folk songs are in the way of missing due to lack of preservation. That is why the proper measure is to be taken to preserve it. The folk song tells us about the philosophies, ideologies, culture and life style of the previous generation of Bodo people.

Therefore, in this research work the researcher intended to collect the Bodo folk songs of Goalpara district area and taking to analyse for understanding the feeling of Bodo Kachari people through the folk songs extent in Goalpara areas.

So far, the researcher is trying to study about the Bodo culture of the area in comparison to other areas. The folk culture of Goalpara district area is quite different from other areas and there is influence of modernism in today's scenario.

1.6 METHODOLOGY

The study area of this research is Goalpara civil district area of Assam. The data collection during the field works is Bodo dominated areas under Goalpara district.

For the present study, the data are collected by following different method and techniques. Publication of researcher on the respective research papers are collected (Appendix-I). A schedule was used to collect primary data for the study (Appendix-II). During the field work a number of male and female Bodo individuals were interviewed to stock different data pertaining to the present study (Appendix-III). Short genealogies were collected from different households and collected data in relation to folk songs (Appendix-IV). Thus, genealogical method is also employed to collect data to find out the originality of the village people. In order to make a through study about the folk songs, the researcher used the following methods also for collecting data.

- (i) Observation method and

(ii) Interview technique

The term observation as used in this context is not only the visual aspects on the situation, but also involves a full range expression of performing arts and experiences.

Interviewing is the most common field study method employed by folklore collectors. Interview data may include information on what the informant knows, believes, which is explained for further proceeding of the work.

The researcher has collected most of the data from the field with the help of interview technique, as there are two basic methods (a) Directive interview and (b) Non-directive interviews.

- (a) In directive interview, the direction of the interview lies in the hand of the interviewers; such interviews are based on predetermined questions.
- (b) The non-directive interview is also designated as uncontrolled or unguided or unstructured interview. There are no pre-determined settings of questions as control or any rigid directions in this method. An interviewer encourages the respondent to talk about the given topic without any questioning.

The researcher also used the quantitative method for filling up the village list which are have surveyed schedules. The researcher have analysed the influence of the Bodo folk in the villages, educational status, occupational pattern etc. with the help of this method.

Another method, the researcher has used is qualitative method, qualitative description or experience basis. Whatever information collected are simply arranged and analysed.

The researcher is an inhabitant of Goalpara district. She has more or less neighbouring Bodo villages for study work. Thus, the researcher could easily convey the purposes of the present study to the people of this area. It will be based on secondary data also, that is printed materials, books, census report, journals and souvenirs and manuscript of previous generation etc.

The researcher is also resort to other devices with a view to collecting data. The researcher have tried to capture the significant aspects of traditional folk culture of the Bodos through photography, tape recorder, video cassettes, CD, DVD, mobile phone and these are also

used especially to record the folk songs sung by informants, singers which are prevailing among the Bodo Kachari people of Goalpara district area.

1.7 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Many books and articles published by different authors and writers in relation to Bodo folk songs are reviewed. The researcher has gone through that books and studied comparatively in this work. The mentioned books that the researcher have collected and studied are as follows –

- (i) *Bathou Nam Boikhaguni Geedu* (1920) by Prasanna Kumar Boro Khakhalary.
- (ii) *Folk Songs of the Bodos* (1960) by Mahini Mahan Brahma.
- (iii) *The Kacharies* (1911) by Reverend Sidney Endle.
- (iv) *Boro Kacharir Somaj Aru Sangskriti* (1995) by Bhaben Narzzi.
- (v) *Boro Kacharir Geet Mat* by Bhaben Narzzi.
- vi) *Harimud Sibiyari “Ananda Brahmani Methay Bidangshri* (1984) by Jatin Khakhalary
- (vii) *A Descriptive Analysis of the Boro Language* (1977) by Pramod Chandra Bhattacharya.
- (viii) *Oral Songs of Tribal Communities of Assam* (2006) by Dr. Nabin Chandra Sarma.
- (ix) *Geedali Abo* (1938) by Ashilal Dhiman

From among the above mentioned books some books like “*Ananda Brahmani* (Ongkha Daria) *Methay Bidangshri*” a book of collection of Bodo folk songs has been published without any analysis. As the aim and objectives of this research work is to collect and endeavours the Bodo folk songs as well as analysis on the basis of its nature and characteristics. Again in some book the Bodo folk songs are just collected and published with Assamese or English rendering only to understand the meaning. Examples of such books are “*A Descriptive Analysis of the Boro Language*” and “*The Kacharies*”. In this book like *Oral Songs of Tribal Communities of Assam*

by Dr. Nabin Chandra Sarma tries to analysis the Bodo folk songs by classifying it in to the following mentioned sub-generes,

- (i) Songs connected with the seasonal or agricultural festivals,
- (ii) Songs connected with rites and ceremonies, i.e., songs associated with the rites-de-passage,
- (iii) Songs related to worships,
- (iv) Incantations,
- (v) Songs overtone with philosophical idea,
- (vi) Ballads,
- (vii) Songs associated with children,
- (viii) Work songs and
- (ix) Love songs.³

But, in this research work the efforts of the researcher is to analyse the Bodo folk songs classifying more than above mentioned sub genres to make more clear by which the people could easily understand the thoughts and feelings and also the life style of previous generation of a society of that area. The Bodo folk songs have the high literal and poetic values.

The “*Geedali Abo*” by Ashilal Dhiman is completely related to the marriage of Bodo society of Goalpara district area which is prevailing in the Bodo society since immemorial. Each and every songs containing in the book are nothing but only narrating the marriage process from starting to the end of a marriage which the Bodo people of Goalpara district follows.

The researcher has gone through the book “*Bathou Nam Boikhaguni Geedu*” which was first published in 1920. Almost all the songs published in this book narrated about the worshipping process of Bathou Bwrai the supreme God of Bodos and the Kherai puja. The philosophy of Bathou religion, the principle of five elements and all the God and Goddesses worshiped by the Bodo people of Goalpara district is clearly reflected in the folk songs. The most remarkable effort of the author of this book mentioned in the preface of the book is the Boisagu songs of the Bodo people of Goalpara district. They celebrate their Rongjali Boisagu singing with Goalpara dialect that is in Assamese language. But after publication of that book the Bodo people of Goalpara district started to sing in Bodo language only. So far the researcher

assumed the information found from the preface made by the author of that book is the turning point of starting feelings of Bodo nationalism among the Bodo people of the study area.⁴ So, it is also found that the folk songs sung by Prasanna Kr. Boro Khakhalary was the first Bodo folk song sung by Bodo people of this area.

1.8 HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

The hypothesis is following points are supposed to be study and analysed

- (i) Many critic and scholars has writes various articles about the existence and importance of the folk songs exist among the Bodo people of Goalpara district area.
- (ii) The folk songs which are in literal and oral forms have the high literal and historical values have been discussed and analysed.
- (iii) To study and find out about the previous social system and life style of Bodo Kachari people of Goalpara district area.
- (iv) To study the dialect used in folk songs extends in Goalpara district area.
- (v) To study and analysed the social life and custom reflected in the folk songs.
- (vi) To study and analyse the folk songs used as a performing arts which impact in the Bodo society of the area.

End notes

1. Brahma, Kameswar : A Study in Cultural Heritage of the Boros (1998), published with the financial assistance of Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes Guwahati-22, p-1
2. Brahma, Kameswar : A Study in Cultural Heritage of the Boros (1998), published with the financial assistance of Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes Guwahati-22, p-1
3. Hazowary, Latika; Age (65), Sex (Female), Village - Khara Lalpara, P.O. Dudhnoi, Dist. Goalpara, Assam, Occupation- Service, Date of Interview- 12-05-2016 (Informant).
4. Basumatary, Amiya Kr.; Age (53), Sex (Male), Vill. Amguri, P.O.Majjakhili, Dist. Goalpara, Assam, Occupation; Agriculture, Date of Interview – 02-05-2016 (Informant)
5. Sarma, Nabin Chandra, *Oral Songs of Tribal Communities of Assam*, 2006, p.68
6. Boro Khakhalary, Prasanna Kumar; *Bathuo Nam Boikhaguni Geedu*, 1920, pp.14-1